திருச்சி மாவட்ட

வரலாற்றுக் கருத்தரங்கு

ஆராய்ச்சிக் கட்டுரைகள்

SRIRANGAM TEMPLE UNDER KULOTTUNGA-I

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Introduction:

The life of the great Vaishnava Saint Ramanuja is intimately connected with Srirangam temple. The then Chola Ruler, is said to have persecuted Ramanuja, which compelled him, to go to the court of the Hoysala Ruler Vishnuvardhana in disguise, and after the death of the Chola ruler, returned to Srirangam. Ramanuja's date of birth is placed in circa 1017 A.D., that is in the reign of Rajendra Chola-I. If that be so, the only Chola ruler who could have persecuted him, would be Kulottunga I. Till recent times Kulottunga was believed to have ruled for 50 years (1070-1120). Recently the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology has found an inscription which gives 55 years of rule to Kulottunga I; so he should have reigned atleast upto 1125 A.D. The legend of Ramanuja's persecution in the hands of the Chola ruler, portrays the Chola as an antagonist of Vaishnava faith. It would therefore be interesting to study the condition of Srirangam temple under this Chola ruler. This is only a study of the temple under Ramanuja and does not attempt to solve any problem connected with the life of that immortal saint. But this study should necessarily be borne in mind while studying the life of Ramanuja, for it is necessary to know whether the Srirangam temple in any way suffered in the hands of Kulottunga.

This study shows in no unmistakable terms, that the Srirangam temple suffered in no way

during the reign of Kulottunga I. Among the Chola inscriptions found in the temple, by for the largest number, are in the reign of Kulottunga I. Among the 105 Chola inscriptions recorded in the temple, as many as 65 epigraphs are in the reign of Kulottunga I and 14 inscriptions are dated in the reign of Vikramachola, Kulottunga's son. That means, the temple has received maximum benefactions, during Ramanuja's sojourn at Srirangam. (between 1070 to 1135).

Kulottunga's inscriptions are found from his very first year to the end of his reign. Even among the 65 inscriptions, nearly 1/3rd of them are dated between Kulottunga's 40th and 50th year; that is the period when Ramanuja is said to have been persecuted. Suffice it to say that the picture that emerges from the epigraphical study, is that the period of Kulottunga I, was the most propperous period for the Srirangam temple under the Cholas.

KULOTTUNGA'S PERSONAL DEVOTION:

It is of great interest to note that on Pūsam, the natal star of Kulottunga I; special festivals were instituted in the temple every month. In 1110 A.D.(40 th year) Kulottunga himself purchased certain lands at Sirudavur, which were under Tirappu tenure and converted it into a devotana irayile, by paying a lumpsum amount and arranged for special festival, sacred bath and offerings on the day of Pusam, his natel star. The sppcial offering began from the 40th year of the King (26/1947-8). Another but fragmentary epigraph refers to Pūsathrunal of Kulottunga performed everymonth (168-1951-2). This shows Kulottunga's intimate connection with the temple of Srirangam. Two of the records, are personal orders of Kulottunga, making certain modifications in the land tenure and taxes in favour of the temple. One of the queens of Kulottunga Lokamahadevi, was a great patron of Srirangam

temple. Her officers bought some lands and made a gift of them to the temple at the request of one Narayanabhatta. (8/1948-9). Another royal lady, Tennavan Mahadevi, the queen of Rajendra, (probably Rajendra II) made provisions in the temple for the expenses of certain specified festivals in Kulottunga's reign (125/1947-8). She, called Rajarajan Arulmoli alias Tennavan Mahadevi the queen of Rajendradeva, in another epigraph (126/1947-48) also gave money for land for giving alms to devotees. These royal involvements in the temple show the keen interest taken by the Chola ruler in the Srirangam temple during the life time of Ramanuja.

That Sriranganatha was called Pallikondaruliya Anantanārāyanaswami, in the reign of Parantaka I, (10th Century A.D.) is mentioned in one of Kulottunga's inscription (18/1948-49). In Kulottunga's time also, Sriranganatha was called Anantanarayanaswami. (120-1947-8).

THIRUVAYMOLI HYMNS:

It is well known that the sacred hymns Thiruvaymoli of Nammalvar played an important role in the history of South Indian Vaishnavism. The singing of this Thiruvaymoli attracted great attention in many temples and Ramanuja is said to have had a great hand in propagating this practise. Two inscriptions of Kulottunga refer to provisions made for singing, Thiruvaymoli hymns. The first was in the 15th year of Kulottunga I (1075 A.D.) which is perhaps the earliest reference to the singing of these hymns in the temple. The endowment was made by a Commander-in-Chief-Senapatigal Virachola Munaiyadaraiyan of Kottur, who gifted 50 Kalanju of gold for that purpose. The Thiruvaymoli was sung as Palli eluchi.